

# ichinen sanzen

The Essential Spiritual Struggle for Humanity in the 21st Century

- Belief in unlimited potential
- Commitment to our life
- Transformation in the present
- Opening our heart to others

# Study Course

SGL Australia – Study Course October–November 2007

## THIS MONTH

### Review

*Ichinen sanzen in Practice (Dialogue on Life vol 2 pp90-95)*

### Session three

Transformation in the present

### Session four

Opening our hearts to others

## Introduction and Review

*This segment is to be read individually before commencing session three and four. It does not form part of the actual discussion material for these sessions.*

In last month's Indigo, we highlighted the importance of essential *ichinen sanzen*, differentiating it from the theoretical *ichinen sanzen* that T'ien'tai developed from his reading of the *Lotus Sutra*. The course began by introducing the spiritual struggle to believe in our own potential and that of others through the expression of essential *ichinen sanzen*. The three thousand realms in a single life moment was given practical application through examining passages from the New Human Revolution, for example, "Living the essential is a moment-to-moment struggle. Therefore, the place where we are right now is the training ground for our Buddhist practice."

Session one examined how Nichiren Daishonin, and the first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai, proved essential *ichinen sanzen* with their lives by revealing the way to lead themselves and others to happiness. Through gaining inspiration from these exemplary models and praying sincerely to the *Gohonzon*, we can embrace the essential

spirit of *ichinen sanzen* and reveal enlightenment as an ordinary person.

Session two examined the importance of making a vow for *kosen-rufu* as forming the foundation for expanding our lives and expressing absolute happiness. The introductory essay of session two highlighted that, "Nichiren Daishonin and the three presidents of the Soka Gakkai made it their life's mission to realise the vow for *kosen-rufu*" and "The path of oneness of mentor and disciple, which means basing the purpose of one's life on the same wish as the Buddha, is the very essence of Buddhism."

In sessions three and four, we will explore essential *ichinen sanzen* by focussing on the potential contained in the present life-moment to transform, through opening our hearts to others, a life of suffering into one of purpose and value.

## Material for Review

### **Ichinen Sanzen in Practice from Dialogue on Life vol 2 pp 90-95**

Kawada: The following exchange appears in the Sanju Hiden Sho, "Question: the fifth volume of Maka Shikan reads, 'The three thousand worlds are included in each moment of life.' But the life-moment is in-

finitesimally short. How can it contain three thousand worlds? Answer: The phrase 'three thousand worlds existing in one life-moment' has two meanings according to the *Lotus Sutra*: to contain and to permeate. On the one hand, the entire universe is contained in each life at every moment, and on the other, each life-moment continually permeates the entire universe. The life-moment is a particle of dust that holds the elements of all lands in the universe, or a drop of water whose essence differs in no way from the vast ocean itself.' This is the principle of *ichinen sanzen* (the three thousand states of the life-moment) which is the core of Buddhist philosophy.

Ikeda: The life-moment in Buddhism seems like but a fleeting existence, but from a more profound viewpoint we see that it indicates the ultimate reality of life. The philosophy, which the term implies, is a complete and impartial view of the true entity of our life. If we only perceive the moment-to-moment superficial phenomena of human life, we fail to grasp its essence and are bound to mistake the life-moment for something evanescent as did the questioner in the Sanju Hiden Sho. But when we extend our search into even deeper spheres of life, we find that our life-moment extends beyond the bounds of space and time, and is directly conjoined with cosmic life force – the ultimate reality of the universe – which fosters, supports, and channels cosmic life into its unique manifestation within each individual entity. From this, we can realise that human life is the manifestation of the cosmic life force. Each individual actively draws vital energy from the universe, so that we all are unique and independent entities born from the cosmic life itself.

All entities interrelate in perfect harmony that accords with cosmic life's totality, yet never lose their uniqueness. Buddhism calls each such entity a 'life-moment.' A person's life-moment includes the ten states of existence with each state containing all the ten states within. Present in each of these 100 states are the Ten Factors of Life, making 1000 conditions.

Kitagawa: The expression 'three thousand worlds' refers to the unified whole of the ten states of life, each containing all the ten within, besides the ten factors, and the three realms. These figures multiplied ( $10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 3$ ) give 3000.

Kawada: Without full understanding of what 'the three thousand worlds of a life-moment' really means, the whole idea becomes a mere play on words.

Ikeda: That is true. If you concentrate too much on the number, you overlook the profound meaning of the principle. Buddhism provides us with a deep and exhaustive analysis of life's totality and brings to light its depth, breadth, expansion, motion and motivating force as well as life's law of cause and effect. The number 3000 refers to the many different aspects which life can assume – it expresses the totality of all phenomena. We should now think about how this concept is applicable to the real world.

Kitagawa: Let me quote again the passage from the Sanju Hiden Sho: "the phrase 'three thousand worlds existing in one life-moment' has two meanings according to the *Lotus Sutra*: to contain and to permeate. On the one hand, the entire universe is contained in each life at every moment, and on the other, each life-moment continually permeates the entire universe. 'The entire universe' indicates cosmic life. Our life contains all the various laws of the universe, as well as the fundamental power which produces all phenomena in the universe and causes them to pulsate. The life-moment in its ultimate depths is directly connected with cosmic life and works in perfect fusion with it. However, it is extremely difficult to understand exactly what it means to say that our life-moment penetrates the entire universe.

Ikeda: To answer that, we must begin by asking what life-condition is necessary to direct our actions toward our neighbours, community and beyond, and let a growing positive influence reach out from our own country to the entire world.

Kawada: Such a life-condition must have a motivating force which can extend throughout the universe. From the viewpoint of the Ten Worlds, that means Buddhahood. In the light of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, all our life-activities must be based entirely upon this highest state.

Ikeda: When one's inherent Buddhahood is brought to the fore, one's innate power of universal compassion and wisdom actively emerges. Through the law

of cause and effect, the manifestation of the Buddha nature can then grow even stronger and become an integral part of our life. A person who has established Buddhahood as the basic tendency of their life can give full play to the five components of their life and develop their individual qualities to the full. Moreover, they can build lasting happiness, never subject to the change in their surroundings and with sweeping compassion, exert a favourable influence upon those around them.

Our Buddhahood reaches out and influences all other people – those in Hell as their basis of life, those confined to transmigration in the Six Paths, or even those susceptible to conceit and self-satisfaction. All are bathed in the life-flow of Buddhahood until their own innate Buddha nature begins to appear. As our effort continues to bring out the Buddha nature in all people, those around us gradually achieve their own self-reformation. When that begins to happen, people whose lives are rooted in Bodhisattva and Buddhahood will appear everywhere in the world.

Kitagawa: It is like a nuclear chain reaction. The first splitting atom is almost undetectable, but two other atoms split, then four, and on and on. In this way the reaction begun by a single atom multiplies as still others are induced to split and send particles into the main mass of fissionable material. At the critical stage this causes virtually instantaneous fission of the atoms and a tremendous amount of energy is released in one burst. Nuclear fission can, of course, be directed into evil as well as good channels, but its basic chain reaction provides a useful metaphor for our discussion.

Ikeda: If the activities of the five components are based upon Buddhahood, they can arouse the dormant Buddhist nature in others. Thus the life force of Buddhahood in its striving to reach the entire universe will cause a chain reaction of enlightenment among people. Someone who attains Buddhahood is similar to the atom which triggers a fission reaction. His pure and profuse life-flow permeates his entire family and causes them all to undergo a remarkable change in the depths of their lives.

Our family, illuminated by the power of compassion and wisdom and thus given new life, can influence all those around it. The life-flow of Buddhahood will be channelled into neighbours, colleagues at work and

school, eventually reaching out to the government and industries of the nation. Just as withering grass is restored to life by a good rain, or a caravan is refreshed at an oasis, the people and their environment will be charged with power and joy of living as they find themselves in the life-flow of Buddhahood.

The life-flow envelops a family and their home, neighbours and their community, workers and their office, doctors, nurses and patients and the whole hospital; teachers, students and the school; judges, lawyers and the courts; statesmen and the government. Inspired by universal compassion, these people begin to develop their own unique qualities and character, and the Buddhahood within them gives their surroundings a new, vibrant vitality. They are then able to influence change on a much larger scale, until we begin to see the whole world being transformed. This is the only way mankind and the “spaceship earth” can be saved from destruction. The practice revealed by *ichinen sanzen*, the 3000 realms in each moment of life, is to embrace the highest ideal and determination to create an eternal, enlightened land in this trouble-ridden world. But without constant effort to profoundly and positively influence all types of people and change their environment it will be impossible. It is that kind of determination which charges and continually directs the five components of people who embrace the Mystic Law. The practical meaning of *ichinen sanzen* is that people of faith, who strive to live by it, are entrusted with the mission to manifest the law in their life through their interactions, so that all people in this world can develop their own Buddha nature.

## Guidelines for Session three

### Aim

A renewed determination to establish an unshakable self that can transform any suffering into hope and joy.

### Method

Introduce the study participants who are giving an introduction to the topic and an experience.

Facilitate discussion on the questions for this session.

At the end of the session ask for two pairs of partners to volunteer. One pair to prepare a brief introduction, and the other pair to prepare one of the partner's experiences related to the next session's topic.

All study partners meet and discuss how the material relates to their daily life. The study partners selected to present need to prepare their presentations for the next session.

## Overview

### Faith for Inheriting the Ultimate Law of Life and Death

“Faith means infinite hope.” “The Daishonin’s Buddhism enables us to establish a solid self in the present so that we can transform past sorrows and misery into inexhaustible hope for the future. The heart of the Daishonin’s teaching is that no matter what difficulties we may now face, we should earnestly challenge the present with unflagging optimism and the belief that we can change the future.”<sup>1</sup>

It is challenging to believe that the potential for happiness exists within ourselves at each moment. To enact this belief is possible through the practice of actual *ichinen sanzen*, that is chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. As we face various sufferings, as a matter of course, to live with the attitude that this is the last moment of

our lives means to live with infinite hope as President Ikeda encourages. It does not mean that we have to be swept away by our feelings – falling into the depths of despair when things don’t work out or allowing rapture or tranquillity to overtake us when everything is going our way. Rather, it begins with our determination to find, for example, productivity in tranquillity; or not lose our purpose while experiencing rapture. In other words, when we consistently strive to reveal Buddhahood in the present moment, all our states of life, all our sufferings and rapturous joys are valuable and are transformed into inexhaustible hope for the future. To instil the life condition that now is the moment where I will achieve victory in my life, requires a consistent effort to transform our feelings and experiences into determination based on hope. Herein lies the importance of our practice. We develop the foundation of faith at the core of our lives and make determined action, rather than allowing our ever-changing emotions to dominate our life and responses to our environment.

In session One, we looked at how Buddhahood can be revealed through the function of anger. Let’s take another example; being in love. When we fall in love we often experience the life condition of rapture. We naturally focus our attention on the source of our affection, sometimes to the point where that person becomes the centre of our lives, displacing all else, as rapture temporarily illuminates our lives. As exciting as this is, this state of life does not sustain a life-long relationship. It is when a couple determines to work together for each others’ happiness and strives to establish a happy family that they are able to create value out of life’s inevitable hardships.

Taking full responsibility for our own actions and doing our utmost to inspire others can be said to be living as if this moment were our last. Maintaining our confidence in our interactions based on this spirit day by day establishes a deep foundation of happiness in our life. As President Ikeda says, “Even plants and trees naturally undergo steady, continuous growth. In passing, we might only notice striking events such as when they’re in flower, but a person who looks at things with the eyes of a poet or a keen observer may perceive even the most subtle changes.” Perhaps we can say this analogy speaks to the conspicuous and inconspicuous benefit we receive through our practice.

<sup>1</sup> SGI President Ikeda’s lecture series on *The Heritage of The Ultimate Law of Life* instalment 7

It is the day-to-day subtle, deeper changes we make through consistent faith that imbue our lives with Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the reality of *ichinen sanzen*. If we focus only on striking events, we miss the true fulfilment and underlying purpose of our practice to live fully in the present eternal moment. When we are focussed on deepening our faith through prayer, and challenging our present circumstances, the centre of our lives then shifts from the transient expressions to the eternal Law. We are not negatively swayed by our environment and are empowered to take determined action. By making the great mystic law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo the centre of our lives we naturally connect ourselves to all humanity and express ourselves confidently in any circumstance.

But what is this inherent eternity of all existence? Or more appropriate we should ask the question – when is the eternity of all existence? SGI President Ikeda states:

... one of these, we saw, is chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo with the conviction that we are in no way different from the Buddha and the Law, and that our life and death are inherent functions of Myoho-rence-kyo, phases that unfold in the world of Buddhahood... Another key element, we learned, consists of summoning up resolute faith based on the profound insight that now is our last moment, and to practise with this spirit as long as we live in order to have a correct and steadfast mind at the moment of death, the final accounting of this existence.<sup>2</sup>

When we summon up “resolute faith based on the profound insight that now is the last moment,” we are in fact revealing the eternity of all existence through our life now. We recognise that life and death can only be the “phases that unfold in the world of Buddhahood.” That is, the eternity of all existence exist only in life at this moment. Ultimately, our causes now – be they thoughts, words or deeds – are what is most significant. Life and death in the world of Buddhahood exist nowhere other than the present moment. That is, we are already living in the world of Buddhahood. The challenge is to believe this. The cause of sincere and consistent prayer to the *Gohonzon* provides the foundation for this belief.

Putting it another way, when we put Nam-myoho-rence-kyo at the centre of our lives we transform our lives in the present – all else reflects this transformation and is enhanced; love becomes expansive and other earthly desires innumerable multiply in value. Absolute happiness as a fundamental right becomes a reality, and we come to realise that believing in our potential for true happiness and working for other’s happiness is our most profound opportunity for a life of clarity and meaning. Imbuing this conviction with the spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple leads to the path of absolute freedom. The spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple ensures a profound connection to the significance of humanity individually and collectively that becomes the heritage of compassion from generation to generation.

The three existences of past, present and future lie in this moment. The eternity of existence can only exist in this moment. What is important is how we behave now. However, we must recognise that who we are now, the situation that we are in now, is purely due to the choice we have made and the causes we have made through our thoughts, words and deeds. As such, the current circumstance can be transformed in this moment by our thoughts, words and deeds. In this way, we are practising the spirit of Buddhism of attaining enlightenment as we are and in turn we “transform our past sorrows and misery into inexhaustible hope for the future.”

Similarly, the future existence and future circumstances exist within our behaviour at this moment. We can direct the future towards creating value by manifesting hope through our actions now.

Our commitment to our happiness is revealed through our behaviour and attitude. Constantly reliving past glories or past failure cannot change our current situation. Instead, if we choose to appreciate our current situation – acknowledging that we can draw wisdom from our past experience and struggle creatively now – this moment becomes the cause for unsurpassed freedom.

Buddhist appreciation takes the form of determining to polish our behaviour continuously. By doing this we determine the value of the past and the future. When

<sup>2</sup> SGI President Ikeda’s lecture series on *The Heritage of The Ultimate Law of Life* instalment 7

we come to realise that the cause for a life of absolute joy and happiness begins with the strength of our determination, our confidence deepens in the actions we are taking at this moment and our purpose becomes clear. Naturally, for most ordinary being, this life condition is difficult to sustain. And here once again, we can only marvel at the compassionate genius of the Daishonin who inscribed the *Gohonzon* and expounded Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

### Sharing Happiness from this Moment On

As President Ikeda states in the opening quotation, the Daishonin's Buddhism enables us to establish a solid self in the present and we do this by taking responsibility for our own happiness, not abdicating this responsibility to another. Caring for another's happiness and confidently believing in their potential is making the cause for our own profound happiness. Thus, working for other people's happiness provides the foundation for our own happiness. Our activities in SGI Australia give us the opportunity to expand this mission to others outside our immediate family and, in doing so, expand the joy we can experience.

The belief that I and all people have a right to happiness underpins our determination to create value in our environment for the sake of others. This is how we enact our belief and transform ourselves in the present moment. Our own happiness and that of others thereby becomes inseparable.

In the present age, SGI President Ikeda demonstrates this possibility that is available to all of us when we choose to uncover the sun within our hearts, allowing it to shine.

When the sun shines, all those around it feel warmth. And as human beings, we too have the capacity to shine and illuminate the lives of all those around us. As the sun of sincere chanting warms our hearts, the sun that is inherent in our lives generates warmth to all those in our environment. We have the capacity to influence the lives of those around us positively, just as they in turn influence us. Although only we can be responsible for our own happiness, there is absolutely no need to struggle alone. Ever since the time of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, it was the

community of believers, working together in harmonious unity, who propagated the Buddhist teaching and sought to expand the happiness of the community. In modern times, the SGI is this community of believers. This community exists only for the sake of people's happiness – where practitioners of the Daishonin's teachings determine that the most important of all acts is to support just a single person, to believe in their humanity, and to devote our lives to their happiness. When we experience transformation in our lives through this action based on our practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we can confidently encourage others to share this belief. The key is the efforts we make to transform ourselves.

Life itself is one with the universe. Living with the vow to work for others happiness is in fact taking responsibility for our own happiness. When we attribute our suffering to others and blame them for our suffering, we are recognising the interconnectedness of life from the negative perspective. In Buddhism we do not deny that we are influenced by others, rather we determine to create value from this influence. In a famous passage in the *Lotus Sutra*, Shakaymuni declared that, "Devadatta is my friend and teacher," in spite of the fact Devadatta tried to kill him. With such an unassailable life condition, Shakaymuni was not only able to reveal enlightenment but transformed Devadatta's actions into a cause for Devadatta's happiness. In our own circumstances, when we sincerely engage with another, seeking to connect with them with the depth of our lives, desiring only for them to be happy, we create a cause for our own growth and happiness. Our practice and activities in SGI are the perfect training ground for a life of such profound joy.

## Session 3 Study Materials

### Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life, Part 5 Faith for Inheriting the Ultimate Law of Life and Death

When we embrace faith in the Mystic Law and realise that we have been undergoing birth and death in the realm of delusion, we can return to manifesting the eternally inherent nature of birth and death. This realisation activates the great transformative power of the Mystic Law, of which life and death are integral functions. It is the working of the Buddhist principles of the simultaneity of cause and effect and the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds; it is “the Law of the lotus.” (WND1p216)

Unaware of this view of life, unenlightened ordinary beings undergo birth and death in the realm of delusion and experience suffering. Buddhas, on the other hand, realising that their lives and those of others are functions of Myoho-*renge-kyo*, have overcome the sufferings that accompany birth and death in the realm of delusion, and attained a sublime inner state of peace and tranquillity. They undergo birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood throughout the three existences of past, present, and future.

The life and death of all living beings are inherently functions of Myoho-*renge-kyo*, but when our minds are clouded by ignorance, causing us to become confused and attached to worldly desires, we cannot correctly apprehend this truth and instead cling to deluded views of existence. However, in the light of the Buddha wisdom that perceives the true aspect of living beings in the threefold world – as described in the Life Span (16th) chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* – the deluded view of life and death held by ordinary people is nothing but an illusion.

The sutra states that Buddhas apply their wisdom to preaching the Law in order to awaken living beings, who are confused and suffering in the reality of the threefold world, to the original and inherent nature of life and death – in other words, the essential nature of existence. For this reason, in the Life Span chapter,

Shakyamuni reveals that he actually attained enlightenment not in his present lifetime in India, but at a time in the inconceivably distant past. The ultimate Buddhist view of life is unveiled as Shakyamuni proceeds to explain that he continually undergoes birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood throughout eternity.

The original and inherent nature of birth and death perceived by the Buddha is none other than birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood, which is explained through the example of Shakyamuni’s enlightenment in the remote past. Put another way, Shakyamuni’s birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood described in the Life Span chapter is one and the same as the original and inherent nature of birth and death of all living beings.

When we undergo the cycle of birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood, both our life and death shine with unsurpassed brilliance as functions of Myoho-*renge-kyo*. During the manifest phase of life, the pure life essence of Buddhahood wells forth within us, serving as a powerful source of strength for combating difficulties; it is the engine for overcoming all hardships and building a victorious life. When we bring forth our innate Buddhahood and valiantly grapple with reality, we forge and polish our life which, when our mission in this existence is completed, will merge into the Buddhahood of the universe. Not only does our life enter a state of limitless joy and vast and unbounded freedom, but it also becomes one with the compassion inherent in the universe. It is this compassionate impulse of the universe that directs our life toward embarking on another new vibrant existence in the reality of the threefold world, in order to lead those who are suffering to enlightenment. In this way, our lives repeatedly undergo birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood.

As disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, what is the proper way for us to embrace Nam-myoho-*renge-kyo*, which is the ultimate Law of life and death, so that our lives can undergo the cycle of birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood? The Daishonin addresses this question on various levels, clarifying the essential points of faith in the Mystic Law.

The first of these is that our faith must be based on the recognition that birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood is the original and inherent nature of our own existence. The Daishonin explains:

Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment countless *kalpas*<sup>3</sup> ago, the *Lotus Sutra* that leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from one another. To chant Myohorenge-kyo with this realisation is to inherit the ultimate Law of life and death. (WND1p216)

The Daishonin's assertion here of the inherent equality and oneness of all three – that is, Shakyamuni Buddha, the *Lotus Sutra* and ordinary people – is extremely important.

Also, to awaken ordinary people to the inherent truth of birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood, both the actual example of the Buddha who embodies this truth and the teaching or Law that explains this truth are vital.

### **The Teaching for Realising Birth and Death in the Realm of Buddhahood**

It goes without saying that the primary meaning of the phrase, “the *Lotus Sutra* that leads all people to Buddhahood,” is that the doctrine of universal enlightenment is found only in this sutra. At the same time, the *Lotus Sutra* elucidates the Buddha's original vow – a vow of eternal dedication to the cause of helping all living beings attain Buddhahood – as well as the vow of bodhisattvas who pledge to strive alongside the Buddha for this same cause, carrying out the practice of compassion. This could be said to represent the true significance of the *Lotus Sutra*, the quintessence of the Mahayana teachings.

In the Expedient Means (2nd) chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, Shakyamuni Buddha states that he has fulfilled his vow to make all persons “equal to me, without any distinction between us” (LS2p36), and indicates that this vow expresses the wish of all Buddhas. Further, throughout his preaching of “the replacement of three vehicles with the one vehicle” in the theoretical

teaching (the first 14 chapters) of the *Lotus Sutra*, he consistently emphasizes that the persons of the three vehicles – the voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones (persons of the two vehicles) and bodhisattvas – can only hope to attain Buddhahood by earnestly dedicating themselves to this vow.

Why was it that (in the provisional Mahayana teachings expounded prior to the *Lotus Sutra*) Shakyamuni had been so critical of Shariputra and all his other disciples of the two vehicles? One reason was that as they began to show signs of physical aging, their spirits had also withered and aged. In their hearts, they had put a limit on themselves, thinking, “We have grown old. This is as far as we can go. Let's be content with what we have.” They had clearly lost their fighting spirit to work for the happiness of those who were suffering.

Striving to fulfill the vow to lead all people to enlightenment is a concrete manifestation that we are following the path of birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood. We must awaken to the fact that this noble vow is the very essence of our being. Forgetting this vow and failing to seek the ultimate truth is a fundamental cause of delusion.

The *Lotus Sutra* reveals that all people have the potential to attain Buddhahood. In other words, it is a teaching that makes it possible for each and every individual to fulfill life's true purpose by acting in accord with the compassionate workings of the universe.

As outlined above, “the *Lotus Sutra* that leads all people to Buddhahood” indicates the *Lotus Sutra* not only as a teaching of universal enlightenment, but also as an appeal to translate the vow for universal enlightenment into action. The *Lotus Sutra* thus teaches both the principle that all people are Buddhas and also the practice to guide and help awaken them to their inherent Buddhahood.

Taking action so that all may attain enlightenment is the driving force that enables us to actualise birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood. In that sense, “the *Lotus Sutra* that leads all people to Buddhahood” can also be described as a teaching that enables all people to realise birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood.

<sup>3</sup> Kalpa - In ancient Indian cosmology, an extremely long period of time.

## Our Oneness with the Buddha and the Law

The Daishonin says we must chant Myoho-renge-kyo with the realisation that we are in no way different or separate from the Buddha and the Law (WND1p216). Here, “realisation” does not simply mean an intellectual appreciation, but rather belief and understanding – that is, an understanding based on belief, or a heartfelt acceptance and conviction in the depths of one’s life. This is essential.

Such profound inner conviction is forged through efforts to lead others to enlightenment with the spirit of not begrudging one’s life. SGI members who have dedicated themselves tirelessly for the sake of *kosen-rufu* with resolute faith have, in the course of their struggles, gained a strong and vibrant belief and understanding. They are dedicating themselves to the mission of spreading Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and striving all out to do their very best. As such they are already manifesting the vast and expansive life-state of Buddhahood of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo equal in every way to that revealed by “Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment countless *kalpas* ago” and “the *Lotus Sutra* that leads all people to enlightenment.” Each individual, as an entity of the Mystic Law, is powerfully manifesting the life-state of Nichiren Daishonin that is embodied in the *Gohonzon* and living out their lives in harmony with the Mystic Law.

When we make our lives one with the Mystic Law in this lifetime, we remain so after death and, on our next rebirth we will dedicate our lives once more to fulfilling our mission for the Mystic Law. This is the inherent nature of birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood; and it is the essence of a life that forever strives to manifest the workings of compassion.

The Daishonin chanted and propagated Nam-myoho-renge-kyo so that ordinary people could attain this state of life. And when we, his disciples, do likewise, the heritage of the ultimate Law of life and death flows within us, and we can instantly realise birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood.

That is also the purpose of faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. That is why the Daishonin says: “This is a matter of the utmost importance for Nichiren’s disciples and lay supporters,” and “This is what it means

to embrace the *Lotus Sutra*.” (WND1p216)

What is the fundamental path in faith for disciples? It is to dedicate ourselves to *kosen-rufu*, which is the wish of all Buddhas as well as the great desire of Nichiren Daishonin. It is to dedicate ourselves to practising the spirit of the *Lotus Sutra* – in other words, making efforts to help guide all people to enlightenment.

The Law that enables us to realise birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood beats vibrantly in such activities. Only then can we be said to “embrace the *Lotus Sutra*” (WND1p216) in the truest sense.

The *Lotus Sutra* teaches the principle of prolonging one’s life through faith. This is because Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the heart of the *Lotus Sutra*, enables us to manifest our innate Buddhahood, the source of fundamental life-force.

When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the same great spirit and great desire for *kosen-rufu* as the Daishonin, we can experience birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood and tap the fundamental life-force that resides within us. The *Lotus Sutra* (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo) has the power to rejuvenate and revitalise our lives. Through its power, in life, we can grow younger and accumulate good fortune, while in death, we can merge with the vast realm of Buddhahood of the universe as a whole and recharge our vital life-force.

We, the members of the SGI who are striving for *kosen-rufu*, carrying on the spirit of the *Lotus Sutra* and directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin, are noble individuals who are in no way different or separate from “Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment countless *kalpas* ago” and “the *Lotus Sutra* that leads all people to Buddhahood.”

## Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life, Part 7 Sharing Happiness from this Moment On

It is rare to be born a human being, and life as a human being, moreover, is hard to sustain (WND1p851). From the standpoint of eternity, this existence seems but an instant. My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, often used to say, “You know, a hundred years from now none of us will be here.”

Life is limited, and the way that we live it is important. Buddhism teaches that we can build victory for all eternity during this lifetime. This is the purpose of our Buddhist practice. And our success in this endeavor hinges on maintaining our Buddhist practice throughout our lives – in other words, continuing in faith.

In terms of chronological sequence, we can readily appreciate that changes made in this existence will affect our future lifetimes. It may be a little more difficult, however, to grasp that such changes can have an impact on our past lifetimes, too. Also, though we speak of transforming the cycle of birth and death, this doesn't mean putting an end to it. When we embrace the *Lotus Sutra* in our present existence, we come to deeply appreciate that past rounds of birth and death in the realm of suffering and delusion are like a dream, and that life and death as functions of the Mystic Law – that is, birth and death in the realm of Buddhahood – are the actual awakened reality. This is the true aspect of life clearly perceived by the Buddha.

Human beings usually think of the world of suffering as being their actual reality. But from the standpoint of the original and inherent nature of life and death, this world of suffering is akin to a dream. In his writing titled *The Unanimous Declaration by the Buddhas of the Three Existences*, the Daishonin describes birth and death as experienced in the nine worlds as a dream realm, and the eternal and unchanging world of Buddhahood as the true, awakened realm. He writes:

One should also understand that one's own mind that views the dream realm of birth and death in the nine worlds is no different from the waking mind of the world of Buddhahood, the world that is eternal and unchanging. The place in which one views the dream realm of birth and death in the nine worlds is no different from the place in which one experiences the waking state of the world of Buddhahood, eternal and unchanging. There is no difference in the mind itself, and no difference in the place where all this occurs. But the dreams are all false or empty, while what is experienced in the waking state is all true.

**Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life, Part 3**  
Tapping the Great Life-Force of the Universe in

### Our Own Lives

The Daishonin says, "Living beings that pass through the two phases of life and death are the entities of the Ten Worlds." (WND1p216). This contains a very important point. The two aspects of life and death – comprising life in its totality – encompass the Ten Worlds. This means that all living beings of the Ten Worlds are entities of the Mystic Law that embodies these two phenomena. Or put another way, the phenomena of life and death, which are inherent in the Mystic Law, are the true substance of the lives of all beings of the Ten Worlds.

For example, let us look at people who are born into the lowest of the Ten Worlds, the world of Hell. Not only do they physically manifest the world of Hell (the physical manifestation corresponding to the aspect of life), but they also possess inside them the latent potential for the other nine worlds (the latent potential corresponding to the aspect of death). The two phenomena of life and death – representing life in its entirety, which is the Mystic Law – are the true substance of their beings.

This is the original and inherent nature of life and death. While filled with anxiety and confusion about the important questions of life and existence, human beings are racked by the sufferings of aging and death. This is because they fail to realise that their own existence is part of the cycle of "birth and death that has always been an innate part of life" (OTTp174). But when we deeply realise this truth, we are liberated from the illusions and sufferings of birth and death. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, once spoke about the inherent nature of our life from time without beginning based on his profound awakening in prison, and described it as a state of life totally free of the illusions of birth and death.

When we observe our existence, we find that (in the remote past of time without beginning) we lived with total freedom in a brilliant realm of purity and joy. We were all beautiful in spirit and of like mind. We who once dwelled in such a sparkling sphere have now all emerged together in this strife-filled *saha* world. Looking back, I feel as though it was only yesterday that we lived in that pure, pleasant realm. How could we possibly forget that brilliant place? How could we

forget the friends with whom we joyously passed our lives in absolute freedom? And how could we forget the vows we made together at the assembly where the *Lotus Sutra* was expounded?

This *saha* world was also originally inhabited by friends who are all joyful and pure and bright and on good terms with one another. Isn't it, therefore, most pitiful and sad that, having been forced to drink the poisons of greed, anger, and jealousy by proponents of the provisional Mahayana, Hinayana, and non-Buddhist teachings, we have become like deranged children and have all forgotten the remote past?<sup>4</sup>

Good friends, joyful, pure, and bright, dwelling together harmoniously in freedom, who pledged to strive for the happiness of both themselves and others – this describes our original selves of time without beginning, free of all illusion; this describes the realm of time without beginning. To recover this original self, this realm of time without beginning, we each need to be aware that our own life is an entity of the Mystic Law. And we have to realise that we ourselves possess the power to break free of the chain of causality that gives rise to illusion and leads to suffering.

All living beings have the potential to manifest any of the Ten Worlds. But though it may be relatively easy to manifest the nine worlds, manifesting the highest world of Buddhahood is extremely difficult. Why is this? On deeply pondering and pursuing this question, Shakyamuni Buddha elucidated the causality for revealing the world of Buddhahood. In other words, he clarified the strict law of cause and effect, or principle of causality, that influences and determines a person's state of life in the here and now. There are two levels to the principle of causality. The first is that of simple karmic retribution – that is, receiving reward or punishment in accord with one's actions. This way of thinking teaches that making good causes leads to happiness, joy and ease, while making bad causes leads to suffering, pain and misery. The second level goes beyond this former idea to reveal a still more fundamental principle of causality governing all life. Buddhism teaches that when we manifest the supreme world of Buddhahood that is inherent in our lives, we actualise the highest good and can thereby instantly establish a state of unshakable happiness. In other words, it is possible for us to bring forth the ef-

fect or fruit of enlightenment by revealing our innate Buddhahood or Buddha nature in our lives as living beings of the nine worlds who are bound by the causality of the three paths of earthly desires, karma, and suffering.

This deeper level of causality taught in Buddhism differs from ordinary temporal cause and effect, or general causality. At work here is the principle of simultaneity of cause and effect, which teaches that through a change in the depths of our own heart or mind, we can manifest our inherent Buddhahood in our lives immediately, right here and now.

The causality of the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth – the cycle of transmigration – is a strict causal law that no one can escape. This causality highlights that each individual is responsible for their own life. In that respect, it offers a much greater sense of independence and freedom than the idea that the individual is helplessly at the mercy of an arbitrary destiny or fate bestowed by some transcendent absolute being. However, it ultimately leaves people feeling overwhelmed and oppressed by the massive weight of karma they have accumulated over countless existences. This is where the causality of the Mystic Law comes in. Based on the principle that living beings possess all of the Ten Worlds, it clarifies how we can break free of the heavy weight of accumulated karma by transforming it at the most fundamental level of life itself. Each of us, regardless of what spiritual state we may be in at present, absolutely possesses in the depths of our life the powerful state of Buddhahood overflowing with supreme wisdom. When we reveal this inner Buddhahood, we can overcome all obstacles. This is the working of “the Law of the lotus” (WND1p216) – that is, the law of simultaneity of cause and effect. When we awaken to this reality, we can break through any hardship or adversity and positively open up and transform our destiny. This is how we can attain ultimate, unshakable freedom abounding with supreme autonomy. Also, when we are confident of the infinite power within us, an indestructible hope is born in our hearts. Thus, when difficulties assail us, no matter how serious, we are able to see them as challenges through which we can demonstrate the power of the Mystic Law within us, and also as wonderful, sought-for opportunities that we should tackle head-on. When we approach things

<sup>4</sup>Toda Josei Zenshu (*The Collected Works of Josei Toda*), 1985, vol. 1, p 342

with this positive attitude and tenaciously surmount and triumph over each obstacle, we can develop and elevate our own state of life enormously and construct a truly invincible state of freedom. Myoho-rence-kyo is indeed the supreme teaching, bringing people true hope and inner freedom.

First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi remarked:

The life-force of each and every one of us without exception is a manifestation of the great life-force of the universe. Accordingly, the great Law that is the fountainhead of the life-force of all universal phenomena, which manifest as agents of that life-force – including human beings, which do the same – is the Mystic Law and, as such, is the essence and the substance encompassing all principles governing life.

When we tap the great fundamental life-force of the universe that is inherent in our lives, we achieve a towering state of being in which we can manifest power as immense as the universe itself.

This towering state of life is certainly not governed by a selfish impulse that seeks only personal happiness. Rather, it gives rise to a spirit of mutual support and encouragement directed toward everyone realizing their full potential, and toward drawing forth and harmonising each person's individuality. To care for and encourage others is compassion – and compassion is a function that pervades the entire universe. That's why President Toda used to describe the universe as inherently manifesting the workings of compassion. He wrote:

In the first place, the universe in its entirety is the substance of the Buddha, and all phenomena in the universe are the workings of compassion. Therefore, compassion is the inherent nature of the universe. Since the universe itself is compassion, that of course means that our daily activities naturally constitute the workings of compassion themselves. Because we lead privileged lives as human beings, we must not descend to the same level as animals or plants. Carrying out more exalted activities is the attitude of those truly dedicated to serving the Buddha.

As the Daishonin taught, we must chant the *daimoku* of true Buddhism of the Three Great Secret Laws ourselves, encourage others to do the same, and foster still more people whose activities naturally abound with compassion. When we chant the *daimoku* of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo with the deep conviction that we are entities of the Mystic Law, the fundamental law of the universe, we can bring forth the great life-force of the Mystic Law that is infused with wisdom and compassion. And we can use it to break through any painful difficulty or obstacle and establish a state of absolute happiness that nothing can destroy.

### **Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life, Part 7**

#### **The Law of Cause and Effect – Everything Ultimately Hinges on the Present**

Regarding the Buddhist principle of causality that operates over the three existences of past, present, and future, an important point, first of all, is that in his discussions of causality, the Daishonin always places primary focus on the present. In *The Opening of the Eyes* he quotes a passage from the *Contemplation on the Mind-Ground Sutra* on the workings of causality over the three existences:

If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present.

I was deeply struck by these words when I first read them in my youth, because they drove home to me that nothing is more important than the present and our own faith when it comes to cause and effect. This sutra passage and the Daishonin's related explanation in *The Opening of the Eyes* clarify that the essence of the Buddhist view of causality lies in changing our present self. We see the Daishonin express both unassailable confidence in being able to transform any negative karma from the past, and boundless hope in the certainty of enjoying immense happiness in future lifetimes – all achieved as a result of his present actions for the sake of the Law (WND1p287).

The Daishonin's Buddhism enables us to establish a solid self in the present so that we can transform

past sorrows and misery into inexhaustible hope for the future. The heart of the Daishonin's teaching is that no matter what difficulties we may now face, we should earnestly challenge the present with unflinching optimism and the belief that we can change the future.

In any event, our faith, our Buddhist practice, in this existence determines the direction of all of our lifetimes throughout past, present, and future – that is, whether they will be pervaded by happiness and compassion, or by sorrow and darkness.

Faith means infinite hope. There is not the slightest doubt that we can create the causes for our eternal future happiness in this present lifetime and in this present moment. Because its beneficial powers are difficult to fathom, the Law is called “mystic.”

## Discussion questions for Session Three

“Nothing is more important than the present and our own faith when it comes to cause and effect.” Discuss this in reference to making the *Gohonzon* the centre of our lives.

Living in the present moment is not a passive existence. What actions can we take to develop a life condition so that we can happily work to fulfil our mission to our heart's content?

We know through the study material, that creative transformation is the key to changes in the environment. Discuss how unity can be the means by which we transform our fundamental darkness.

## End of Session Three

## Guidelines for Session four

### Aim

A deeper recognition of our responsibility to bring forth the Buddha nature in ourselves and others through courageous and exemplary action.

### Method

Introduce the study participants who are giving an introduction to the topic and an experience.

Facilitate discussion on the questions for this session.

Suggestion: Celebrate completing the study course by agreeing on participating in a common activity (e.g. see a film relevant to the themes discussed and dialogue afterwards).

## Overview

(In order to save people from unhappiness) “what counts most is your determination to practice the Daishonin's teachings... No one can know his or her future. Tomorrow lies shrouded in darkness where the countless problems of human existence await. What counts is a person's life force .... Toda's charm seemed to sparkle brighter each day. The change in the man was incomprehensible, but others could not deny it – it was right before their eyes. Toda simply said it resulted from practicing the essence of Buddhism ... He proceeded to teach them about human revolution, the change of destiny achieved by practicing the correct teachings of Buddhism with sincerity and courage .... The transformation of a human being – the recognition of one's own dignity and individuality and the full flowering of his or her potential – is the shortest road to the transformation of society, education, science, government, culture and indeed, the whole of life. Toda stressed this over and over.”<sup>5</sup>

# Session Four

Opening our hearts to others

“Humankind is now truly at a crossroads,” states President Ikeda in one of the extracts chosen as study material for this session, and he asks, related to this significant time in history: “Will we build a culture of non-violence based on belief in the Buddha nature in all people? Or, will we choose barbaric violence in which both self and others remain shrouded in darkness and ignorance?” This is the quintessential question we, who embrace Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, must ask ourselves.

In this year’s peace proposal President Ikeda makes the important point that it will be the awakening of each person to their limitless potential (human revolution) that is the key to transforming a de-humanised society to one that values life itself above all. The movement of the SGI has no other purpose than this inner transformation of the individual, assuring the loftiest goal of absolute respect for all life.

The inexhaustible wellspring that will enable humankind to build such a global culture, based on Buddhist humanism, is the principle of a single life-moment encompassing three thousand realms – the profound reality of the interconnectedness of the universe with the self. “Through chanting the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the nine worlds and the world of Buddhahood become one; that is, we actualise the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds. This is what produces a great transformation in our state of life” (The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra V4p210). In other words, with the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin the gap between the ordinary person and the Buddha was removed. *Nam* of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means to devote one’s life to the law. This is a two way process – in the act of paying our utmost respect to the universal truth – that is at the same time inherent in our life and pervading the universe – we manifest the boundless wisdom of the Buddha that enables us to respond compassionately to every changing circumstance of our life. When we engage fully in practice and faith, we express the infinite power of the Law and the Buddha, accordingly.

*Ichinen sanzen* makes possible the construction of a rich spiritual realm in people’s hearts whereby personal fulfilment becomes synonymous with global happiness. Transforming our society that is lacking in humanity, into an enlightened realm of humanism, is made possible when each person’s individual ac-

tions are dedicated to helping others overcome misery and misfortune. The human revolution of Mrs Chan, whose story is told in the study material, was ignited through relationships of trust and encouragement grounded in Buddhism such that she could transform her karma into a humanistic life dedicated to value creation. She turned her suffering into her mission. Josei Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, was absolutely convinced that the power of the Mystic Law is infinite and Mrs Chan’s story, and the testimonies of countless other practitioners of the *Lotus Sutra*, are inspiring examples re able to become winners in society, proving the greatness of Buddhism. Discovering the power that is beyond or outside of us and is, at the same time, within us, is truly revolutionary. This is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

## Sharing Buddhism

Courageous action based on unwavering conviction

The most difficult challenge humanity faces today is in the realm of transforming human life; in other words, believing that the Mystic Law exists within us and in all others. To propagate the Law with this spirit is challenging precisely because of the tendency within human beings to look for solutions (i.e. the Law) outside ourselves. When we do this we easily succumb to blaming others or our environment; we harbour ill will against others, thus negating their Buddhahood; we readily yearn to escape the situation, believing that if we go somewhere else things will be better; and we are quick to complain and grumble about our lot. In all these situations we are in fact rendering ourselves powerless and we cannot see that it is inner change that is needed, not escape or blame. In short, when we seek the solution to our unhappiness outside ourselves, we inevitably suffer because we do not recognise that courage is needed to grasp the situation, take responsibility and transform it into an opportunity for value creation.

A Buddha, rather, triumphs over every adversity and sees every difficult situation as an opportunity to elevate the spirit. The practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, in contrast to other practices that may encourage dependency on another person or a deity, empowers each of us to develop a stand-alone spirit

that is able to courageously take on any challenge absolutely convinced that victory will be awaiting us. In addition, Nichiren's philosophy wisely articulates that no individual's achievement is possible without the support of fellow human beings who share our goal for *kosen-rufu*.

The Daishonin's true intention, like that of the three founding presidents of the Soka Gakkai, has been to lead humanity to true happiness. As courageous humanists, through their example, without begrudging our lives we too can wage an internal battle against the fundamental darkness that causes ourselves and others to suffer. This is the true meaning of Buddhist propagation – an act of utmost compassion and respect for the dignity of our fellow human beings. In the extracts we are studying President Ikeda emphasises that propagation can never come from contention, self-righteousness, exclusivity or anger, but rather from the Buddha state that desires to defeat evil. Our mentors have taught us that when we confront or attack evil it must always come from Buddhahood rather than anger. It must be based on compassion. True compassion consists of challenging and defeating the evil that destroys another's life; it is the irresistible and whole-hearted care we show for another. When we share the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin it is important that we feel a deep respect for that person and that we engage in dialogue that engenders mutual understanding and connectedness. Joyfully sharing Buddhism becomes the means for us to forge indestructible lives.

In our society the overall tendency is to use people to serve the egoistical desires of those in power. The *Lotus Sutra*, by contrast, expounds the equality of all people, the nobility of all life. The *Lotus Sutra* is the supreme sutra because it upholds the banner of humanism. This message of the *Lotus Sutra* could not possibly be conveyed without our mentors. Indeed, the teachings of the Buddhism, which is the law of life, can only be transmitted through the bond of mentor and disciple. This is because these teachings cannot be communicated through words or concepts alone, and, to be understood, need the lives of those who wholeheartedly

strive for *kosen-rufu*. Our mentors, Nichiren and the three presidents of the Soka Gakkai, have demonstrated what it means to be a great human being, showing supreme respect for all of humanity in all their actions. And to date, President Ikeda has had conferred upon him 218 scholarly titles based on his behaviour as a human being. He exemplifies the possibility of deeply respecting another while, at the same time, challenging their fundamental darkness, as it arises. In short, President Ikeda makes it clear to us through his words and actions, that humanity's imperative is to cultivate global citizens who work together for truth and justice, as they hold the happiness of all of humanity in their hearts and minds. Human revolution "is the best path for creating the human security necessary for ensuring the peace and welfare of all people<sup>6</sup>.

## Session Four Study Materials

### Human Awakening

A victorious life that builds lasting happiness, unaffected by changes in the environment<sup>7</sup>

Capitalism revolves on its own axis, pursuing without cease that which is possible and that which is profitable. This is its essential nature. Values such as the assurance of employment and employee benefits will naturally take second place to the pursuit of profit. Further, those living under the sway of the technological-economic-scientific order may be nuclear technocrats who, in pursuit of the possible, would strive to enhance the destructiveness and lethality of weapons with no thought to the horrors resulting from their use. Or they may be bio-technocrats who, in pursuit of the possible, would engage without hesitation in human cloning and germline genetic engineering, which can undermine the fundamental conditions for human dignity. Comte-Sponville lambastes these as "technically competent wretches."<sup>8</sup> It is not my intention to paint all engaged in the economic and scientific fields with the same broad brush. There are, needless to say, many ethical businesspeople and scientists. But so long as the basic axis is that which is possible versus that

<sup>6</sup> SGI President Ikeda's essay, *Forging ties with the world's universities* in *Hope for a Brilliant Future*, September 2007 p17

<sup>7</sup> Daisaku Ikeda's 2007 Peace Proposal – *Restoring the Human Connection: The First Step to Global Peace*

<sup>8</sup> Comte-Sponville, *Le capitalisme est-il moral?* p81

which is impossible, there is a persistent danger that the human element will be overlooked.

Looking at our world today, we see clear signs that such negative potentialities are being realised. A purely egocentric life-state, inflated to a height of 84,000 yojanas, marginalises the existence of the other. Human beings, however, can exist only through their interrelations: Where there is no other, there can be no self. Humanity, in a word, has been driven completely from the stage. This kind of estrangement can make young people, especially, vulnerable to those who would manipulate and prey on their need to believe.

This is the crisis that contemporary civilisation confronts. The internal logic of the technological-economic-scientific order is incapable of restraining those most responsible for the crisis – “technically competent wretches.” This restraint must be applied from without, principally from the second, legal-political order.

In the same way, the internal logic of the second order is unable to restrain the actions of sly “legalistic wretches” who abide by the letter of the law, and here again restraint must be applied from without, from the third, moral order. But the internal logic of this third order permits the existence of “moralising wretches”—hypocrites and dogmatists who know how to skillfully mouth the language of morality. The moral order does not readily accede to restraint from without; the ethical order or order of love has the role of completing and opening the moral order to a higher realm of possibilities. Even if the virtues to which they urge us are the same, the moral order will tend to do this in the language of duty and obligation. In contrast, the order of love is propelled along the vectors of joy and satisfaction.

Without the qualitative elevation of individual human beings, neither social transformation nor the creation of a more positive society is possible. While this may seem obvious, reliance on organisations and the submersion of the individual into the group is a failing all too common in human history. As Carl Jung

(1875–1961) warned, “Totalitarian demons are called forth, instead of the realisation that all that can really be accomplished is an infinitesimal step forward in the moral nature of the individual.”<sup>10</sup>

As the genealogy of totalitarianism demonstrates, the more gaping the absence of humanity, the more vulnerable people are to its demonic allure. Contemporary mass society, with its high degree of scientific development and communications technologies, provides ample opportunity for the dark activities of demagogues and their dangerous appeals.

The “infinitesimal steps” Jung refers to are in fact utterly essential, for without them any positive change will be fragile and easily destroyed. Jung’s insight is deeply resonant with the SGI’s enduring challenge of human revolution: “A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and, further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind.”<sup>11</sup>

The late Michitaro Tanaka (1902–85), one of Japan’s most eminent philosophers, expressed his high expectations of the Soka Gakkai even as he noted the risk that so-called higher religions whose essence is a personal faith may, as their adherents grow in number, devolve to a more collectivist form of religious expression. Noting my authorship of *The Human Revolution*, Tanaka expressed his hope that I would succeed in the effort to strengthen the personal aspect of Buddhism.

A continued focus on the personal and the individual is the very essence of our movement. It is because, I believe, we have remained firmly rooted in this commitment that the Soka Gakkai and the SGI have grown to their present extent. We can never in any future age allow ourselves to deviate from this path. To do so would be to turn our backs on the spirit of Nichiren, the founder of the Buddhist tradition on which we draw, who clearly declared that we must make the individual our model and exemplar. From this viewpoint, we can clearly see the potential of our SGI movement to respond to the crisis of civilisation and to the needs of people making the laborious as-

<sup>9</sup> Carl Jung, *The Fight with the Shadow*, p 226

<sup>11</sup> Daisaku Ikeda, *The Human Revolution*

cent toward the recovery and restoration of humanity in the face of the dehumanising imperatives of the technological-economic-scientific order.

I am firmly convinced that Josei Toda's declared determination to remove the claws hidden in the depths of the nuclear issue illuminate the essence of the task at hand. With that pride and conviction, I trust we will continue to advance along the broad path to peace.

## Wisdom of The Lotus Sutra Vol4 pp210-215

Endo: The other day I heard the experience of a Ms Chan Boksoon of Hiroshima and was extremely moved. Ms Chan is a Korean national living in Japan who was a victim of the atomic bomb. Having overcome anti-Korean discrimination from the Japanese and the painful aftermath of the bombing, she is now active as a volunteer spokesperson for peace.

Ms Chan, whose parents had immigrated to Japan, was born in Osaka. Her family had run an extensive agricultural operation in Korea. Militarist Japan invaded the country, however, and the family lost its land as a result of Japan's colonialist policies. They had no choice but to come to Japan. In making their decision, they had placed their trust in advertisements promising that a wonderful life awaited them there. But after being sent to one dangerous construction site after another, they finally arrived in a small village deep in the mountains. They were put in a tiny room in the corner of a cocoonery that was partitioned off by only a straw mat, and they were made to work as assistants to a tenant farmer.

Moreover, they were assigned to work a swamp like field. There was no way they could get a satisfactory harvest from this poor piece of land. They reportedly lived in a constant state of hunger, surviving on a meagre allowance and what plants and fruit they could collect.

Suda: That's terrible. At the time, a great many Koreans were similarly duped into coming to Japan.

Endo: They later moved near Hiroshima. A year later, on 6 August 1945, the rumour spread that the city had been totally destroyed by a new kind of bomb. Ms Chan and her mother, concerned about the safety

of relatives and friends, entered the city of Hiroshima immediately after the blast. As a result, Ms Chan became a victim of secondary radiation from the bomb. She was twelve. When they finally located Ms Chan's aunt and her son, they found them so badly burned that there was nothing they could do for them.

Her aunt cried: "There are too few doctors and too little medicine ... not enough to go around for Koreans. All we can do is wait for death to come!"

At this, her mother wailed: "Our country was taken, and we were brought all the way to Japan to be mercilessly worked like cows and horses. They don't even make death easy for us; instead they force us to die in excruciating flames. What offense did we commit? Will they continue to discriminate against us even after we are dead?" Even now Ms Chan vividly recalls how her mother sobbed and lamented, pounding the ground with her fists.

Later, when she was sixteen, Ms Chan married. She married so young because her family had limited means and there were too many mouths to feed. From around the time she gave birth to her first child, she was afflicted by severe anaemia and various internal disorders – probably as a result of her exposure to the atomic bomb – and had to undergo many operations. She was told by her doctor that she had no chance of recovery, and when she was transferred to a hospital in Hiroshima, she was reportedly in a coma.

Her husband stopped coming to see her, and she and her two small children had to share her hospital meals. Since she had no money, she was forced to leave the hospital and wound up living in a tiny hut without running water or utilities. They had to go to a neighbourhood park to use the toilet. It was a pitiful existence.

The local women of the Soka Gakkai extended a helping hand to Ms Chan and her family. They would warmly encourage her, saying things like, "Let's become happy together!" and would sometimes bring over dishes of hot noodles for her and her children. What a profound impression this must have made on Ms Chan, who had lost all trust in people!

# Session Four

Opening our hearts to others

In 1964, at age thirty-two, she began practising Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Through earnestly exerting herself in faith, she succeeded in recovering vibrant health. Upon witnessing this, her husband also took faith.

Ms Chan had a question that had been on her mind for a long time. She wondered why she had to suffer so much. When she learned about the Buddhist concept of deliberately creating the appropriate karma, meaning that one undergoes suffering in order to help other people in similar circumstances, she found at last she could make sense of her predicament.

"I see," she exclaimed. "So I have a mission that only I can fulfil. My situation is my responsibility." Through reading President Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons and studying your guidance, President Ikeda, Ms Chan developed a strong determination: "There must be some unique way that I, as a Korean bomb victim living in Japan, can contribute to peace. I will put more effort into fulfilling my mission! I will study harder!"

At fifty-two, she enrolled in night middle-school classes. She later attended night high school, where she maintained a grad point average at the very top of her class. At fifty-seven, she was admitted to the night school of the University of Hiroshima.

Saito: To undertake one's education at that age is no small feat. It must have been very arduous.

Endo: She comments that she cannot recall having once gone to sleep in her bed while she was attending classes or being aware of when she fell asleep and when she awoke. Through such tenacious effort, in the spring of 1995, at sixty-two, she succeeded in getting her diploma.

Now, while teaching part-time in the night school she once attended, she is participating in lecture meetings and symposiums near and far as a spokesperson for peace. She has tirelessly given her support to schools for adult literacy and has carried out volunteer activities to promote education programs in many countries of Asia, including Nepal and the Philippines.

When she joined the Soka Gakkai, Ms Chan was told by the person who first introduced her to the Daishonin's Buddhism, "You will become unimaginably happy." She recalls thinking at that time, "Rather than unimaginable happiness, I would be satisfied with happiness that I can readily imagine. It would be enough if my husband would just quit drinking and get a job." She has in fact constructed a state of life truly far beyond anything she could have then imagined.

Ms Chan says emphatically, "Making the spirit of the 'Monument of Prayer for World Peace' that President Ikeda established in Hiroshima my own, I am determined to exert every ounce of strength I have to fulfil my mission for the peace and happiness of people throughout the world."

## Freely enacting the Ten Worlds

Ikeda: That's a wonderful experience. A wonderful life. A wonderful example of victory through faith.

In the Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," the Daishonin says of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound (who appears in the twenty-fourth chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*): "He manifests thirty-four different bodily forms, illustrating the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds and preaching the Law so as to bring benefit to others" (GZp801).

To lead people to enlightenment, this bodhisattva appears in various guises (thirty-four bodily forms) and widely propagates the *Lotus Sutra* in accord with people's capacity and their worries. This, the Daishonin says, is "illustrating the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds."

Ms Chan's life had sometimes revealed the suffering of the world of Hell and, at other times, the sadness of the world of Hunger. But through faith in the Mystic Law, she realised that these were the effects of *karma* she herself had willingly created in order to show actual proof of faith. She developed the confidence that, for the sake of *kosen-rufu*, a Bodhisattva of the Earth readily undergoes even the most abominable suffering. While revealing various states of life, in the end

the bodhisattva demonstrates victory and so teaches others about the greatness of the Mystic Law. Those who do so are great actors in the drama of the Ten Worlds. Such a life could well be described as revealing “thirty-four different bodily forms” and “illustrating the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds.”

Suda: “Illustrating the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds” refers to the idea that people, though originally Buddhas or bodhisattvas, manifest the various states of life of the Ten Worlds.

Saito: In “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” Nichiren Daishonin, commenting on the passage in the Life Span chapter that reads, “Sometimes I speak of myself, sometimes of others; sometimes I present myself, sometimes others; sometimes I show my own actions, sometimes those of others” (LS16p226), says that it expresses the truth that “the world of Buddhahood contains the Ten Worlds” (WND1p357). Here, he interprets “myself” as pointing to the Buddha’s life, or the world of Buddhahood, and “others” as meaning the various states of life that the beings of the Ten Worlds manifest.

Ikeda: The Daishonin elucidates that, since the remotest past, the Buddha, while appearing in various states among the nine worlds, had been continually taking action as the Buddha. This was possible because the nine worlds continued to exist in the Buddha’s life even after the attainment of supreme enlightenment. This is the meaning of the passage, “All beings of the Ten Worlds are essentially Buddhas.”

Also, in contrast to the theoretical mutual possession of the Ten Worlds found in the Expedient Means chapter, the Life Span chapter explains the actual mutual possession of the Ten Worlds. The Buddha revealed the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds through his own actual conduct. This is the meaning of “Sometimes I speak of myself, sometimes of others...”

Just as Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound leads people to enlightenment through freely manifesting thirty-four bodies, we advance *kosen-rufu* while carrying out various roles and activities, whether it be, for example, through education, business or taking care of

the home. Whether revealing the pain-filled world of Hell, the joyous world of Heaven or the world of Anger, through it all we continue progressing.

## **The World of Nichiren Daishonin’s Writings** A discussion on Humanistic Religion<sup>12</sup>

### Bringing Forth Good through Our Conduct as Buddhists

President Ikeda: He is saying that we should base ourselves not on a mind that is dominated by illusion, but on a mind that accords with the Dharma nature—in other words, carrying through with faith and becoming winners both in terms of society and in terms of Buddhism.

“In the service of his lord, in the service of Buddhism, and in his concern for other people” – in modern terms this means “for our work, for *kosen-rufu* and for society.” This indicates faith and daily life in their totality.

A heart or mind always directed toward good under any circumstances, because it is based on the Dharma nature, becomes the driving force for value-creation in all fields of human endeavour.

The Daishonin advises against being self-righteous, and instead urges us to conduct ourselves in such a way as to win the praise and trust of others. Establishing a solid reputation of trust among those around us is proof of our behaviour as genuine practitioners of Buddhism. A heart directed toward good is reflected in a person’s conduct and way of living, and will not fail to win the understanding of people in society.

Saito: From the countless experiences in faith I’ve heard related at discussion meetings and other venues over the years, the conduct and way of life of SGI members really illustrates what the Daishonin is saying in this passage. Innumerable dramas of victory are arising from the actions of members in Japan and around the world.

<sup>12</sup> Instalment 18, *The Practice of Respecting Others*—Part 2 (of 2 Instalments)

# Session Four

Opening our hearts to others

President Ikeda: Because we are advancing along the correct path according with the principles that “faith equals daily life” and “Buddhism manifests itself in society”, the SGI has gained wide trust and understanding. A religion that becomes estranged from people’s daily lives and society inevitably turns self-righteous.

This no doubt is also the reason why the Daishonin consistently exhorts Shijo Kingo to become a person of wisdom and a victor in society.

When we, as practitioners of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, show such actual proof of gaining trust in our respective communities, we pave the way for transforming the very fabric of society.

Morinaka: Recently, the activities of our members in Japan’s rural villages and outlying islands have been really impressive. These are areas where just gaining the first level of trust can take an extremely long time. People evaluate the behaviour of others over periods of 10 or 20 years. But once trust is established, the atmosphere completely changes. Through the development of trust and understanding on a broad scale, *kosen-rufu* rapidly advances.

President Ikeda: The only way to transform a society plummeting toward darkness into an enlightened world characterised by respect for human beings is for each of us to realise victory by manifesting the Buddha nature through our own actions. Therefore, enormous importance attaches to our inner struggle to steadfastly believe in the Buddha nature in ourselves and others.

Saito: So that’s what is meant by “treasures of the heart.”

President Ikeda: Yes. The Daishonin’s statement, “More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all” (WND1p851), sums up a vital philosophy. In the 21st century, this will doubtless come to be recognised as a pre-eminent theory of value.

For us, “treasures of the heart” means cherishing a vow to work for *kosen-rufu*. There is no greater treasure of the heart. And by accumulating treasures of the heart that arise through our efforts to widely share

the Daishonin’s teaching with others, we can lead an unsurpassed life of infinite value. Countless millions and tens of millions of people have walked this path and solidified it for those who will follow. We have entered an age when the great actual proof we have shown through the power of our faith will be applauded by people throughout the world.

The benefit of pioneering this movement is vast and boundless. This infinite benefit all returns to the SGI members who have worked tirelessly for *kosen-rufu*, and will also flow on to their children and descendants without fail. As the Daishonin writes: “What is hidden turns into manifest virtue” (WND1 p848).

President Ikeda: ... Unless people themselves change, they will repeat the same mistakes.

The important thing is to firmly fix our gaze on our own weaknesses, not to run away from them, but to battle them head-on and establish a solid self that nothing can sway. It is by confronting and defeating negative, destructive tendencies, and changing our karma that we establish strong faith.

At the same time, the Daishonin greatly encouraged Kingo, saying: “Now you have aided Nichiren in his acts of merit. Therefore, it will be very difficult for evil persons to do you harm” (WND1p687).

Shijo Kingo was a practitioner of strong faith who had accompanied the Daishonin to the execution site at Tatsunokuchi and been willing to die alongside him for his beliefs. He had also actively fought to defend his mentor’s integrity. The Daishonin assures his disciple that absolutely no one can destroy his benefit.

Life is full of ups and downs. However, the benefit that we accumulate in the depths of our lives when we base ourselves on the Mystic Law can never be destroyed under any circumstance. In difficult times, we need to persevere tenaciously with deep confidence in this fact.

Hardships forge and polish our lives, so that eventually they shine with brilliant fortune and benefit. If left in its raw, unpolished form, even the most magnificent gem will not sparkle. The same applies to our lives.

Morinaka: The Daishonin also says: “So long as one maintains firm faith, one is certain to receive the great protection of the gods” (WND1p614). A person of strong faith enjoys the staunch protection of the Buddhist gods.

By contrast, a weak or irresolute spirit translates into disbelief and erases one’s good fortune. The Daishonin indicates this in many writings, with such statements as: “Nichiren’s disciples cannot accomplish anything if they are cowardly” (WND1p481), and “A coward cannot have any of his prayers answered.” (WNDp1001)

President Ikeda: Buddhist practice is an ongoing struggle against evil. It is an unending challenge. It means to keep advancing, without retreating a single step. If you have a weak spirit, you will be defeated by devilish functions.

Someone who leaves secular life out of sorrow at the transience of the world and in order to escape from reality is a counterfeit Buddhist. How can someone unable to overcome their own individual sorrow truly practice the Buddha way, which is dedicated to resolving the sufferings of all people? The Daishonin urges Jonin to remain among the people and, while experiencing various sufferings and problems that are a part of human existence, forge a path to happiness. He thus sets forth the proper way of life for him to follow.

Here I would like to return to the passage, “The wise may be called human, but the thoughtless are no more than animals” (WND1p852). There is no higher wisdom than to dedicate one’s life to manifesting one’s Buddha nature and enabling others to do the same. By contrast, those who spend their lives reinforcing ignorance or delusion in themselves and others wind up being no different from animals.

The great Indian spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi writes:

Non-violence is the law of our species (human-kind) as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows

no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the spirit.<sup>13</sup>

Morinaka: His point is, in other words, that to distinguish ourselves from the lower animals, we need to make ceaseless efforts to surpass them in terms of our spiritual development.

Saito: That’s really true. From the perspective of the Ten Worlds, ceaseless effort is required to maintain the life-state of humanity. Without continuous effort to win over oneself, this life-state cannot be maintained. When people relinquish their humanity, they readily fall into the three or four evil paths. Therefore, we must continually exert ourselves in our Buddhist practice to maintain and strengthen our humanity. That surely is the ultimate “precept.”

President Ikeda: The Daishonin writes: “Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world.” (WND1p64) When we believe in and strive to reveal our Buddha nature and help others do the same, we bring the fragrant flower of the Mystic Law to bloom in our lives. There is no greater memory of this human world.

The most wonderful thing about this human world is that we have the capacity to cultivate our Buddha nature of our own volition. There is no greater loss than letting our lives remain shrouded in ignorance and as a result falling into the three or four evil paths, never achieving the supreme honour of realising our highest human potential despite having been born a human being.

Humankind now stands at a fork in the road. As Gandhi says, people must choose between violence, the law of the jungle, and non-violence, the law of humanity. Will we build a culture of non-violence based on belief in the Buddha nature in all people? Or will we choose barbaric violence in which both self and others remain shrouded in darkness and ignorance?

<sup>13</sup> Mohandes Gandhi, *Gandhi An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, p 371

Humankind is now truly at a crossroads. I am confident that the great path of our “behaviour as human beings” is what will lead people throughout the world to choose the way of peace.

## Lecture 3 on On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime

If You Think the Law Is Outside Yourself, You Are Not Embracing the Mystic Law

The *daimoku* of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo has immeasurable beneficial power. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, described the infinite power of the Mystic Law as follows: “It is like lying sprawled on your back in a wide-open space looking up at the sky. All that you wish for immediately appears. No matter how much you may give away, there is always more. It is never exhausted. Try and see if you can attain this state of life.”

Indeed, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo can be likened to a “wish-granting jewel.” How can we develop the boundless state of life that enables us to bring forth the necessary strength when it’s needed? President Toda often used to say: “If you really want to achieve such a state of life, you have to fight with every ounce of your being for the *Lotus Sutra*, for *kosen-rufu*!”

It is the spirit to strive forever together with the Buddhas of the three existences and with Brahma and Shakra – wherever one might find oneself in the universe – to actualise a world of happiness and peace dedicated to value-creation, by helping people overcome misery and misfortune and the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death. Such was the vast and untrammelled spirit of my mentor.

Throughout everything, Mr Toda steadfastly continued to seek the Law that exists nowhere but within our own lives. And he stressed the importance of living true to oneself. His starting point was his profound realisation in prison that the Buddha is life itself and his awakening to his identity as a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

He also often spoke of the spirit of faith we need in order to perceive the Mystic Law within us, saying: “You have to be resolved that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is your own life!” or “Propagating the Mystic Law in

the Latter Day means firmly believing that your life is nothing apart from Nam-myoho-renge-kyo!” This is the spirit that the Daishonin teaches when he says: “When you chant myoho and recite rengo, you must summon up deep faith that Myoho-renge-kyo is your life itself.” (WND1p3)

## Sharing Buddhism: Courageous Action based on unwavering conviction

Transforming Our Fundamental Attitude – Refusing to Live a Life That Is an “Endless, Painful Austerity”

A Buddhist teaching that affirms the existence of the Law in each person’s life is one that treasures the individual. It calls out to each person, encourages their individual human revolution, and seeks to lead all people to enlightenment. In the appearance of one person after another embracing faith, we find the principle of bodhisattvas steadily emerging from the earth to propagate the Law, and the unchanging formula of *kosen-rufu*.

This is the path of the Soka Gakkai that the first three presidents – Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda, and myself – have steadfastly followed. That is why the Soka Gakkai has achieved such phenomenal development, and why *kosen-rufu* has spread throughout the entire world.

In contrast, Buddhist teachings that view the Law as existing outside one’s own life tend to be authoritarian or formalistic, disregarding and repressing the people. They are prone to emphasising rituals or clerical authority, while their followers passively seek to assuage their anxieties through dependence on ceremonies or clergy. Further, taking advantage of the fact that one of human beings’ greatest sources of anxiety is death and what comes after, Buddhist schools of this kind in Japan have come to function almost exclusively as purveyors of funeral and memorial services for the deceased, devolving into what is known as “funeral Buddhism.” They do not offer a philosophy that empowers people or enables them to live better lives.

The Soka Gakkai’s founder, President Makiguchi, asserted that Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is a “teaching for transforming one’s life.” To believe that

the Mystic Law exists within us is to have the confidence that we will definitely become happy and attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. Faith also means actively working for kosen-rufu through sharing the Daishonin's Buddhism based on the conviction that it holds the key to happiness for both ourselves and others. This genuine faith pervades the Soka Gakkai and the SGI. The greatness of the Soka Gakkai and the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple of the first three presidents shine in their undertaking this most difficult of challenges – that of awakening people to the Law within.

President Toda used to say, "You should resolve: 'I am Myoho-renge-kyo!'" The Mystic Law is the "highly effective medicine" (LS16p228) that relieves the sufferings of all people. It is also the great treasure storehouse that brings good fortune and happiness to all. The important thing is to live out our lives based on and completely in sync with the Mystic Law; it is to imbue and solidify our lives with the Mystic Law.

Our daily realities are filled with an endless succession of problems. But with the firm belief that our lives are Myoho-renge-kyo, we should strive to boldly challenge everything with the unwavering conviction that we can overcome all hardships and become happy without fail. When we maintain deep faith based on the foundation that "I am Myoho-renge-kyo," we can take on any problem with courage. The key to victory in life lies in whether or not we can bring forth courage. Not a shrinking timidity but a challenging courage – this is what we need to have! Irrespective of the obstacles we may encounter in the course of our practice, we must not retreat a single step. We must not be alarmed or startled by them. The power of the Mystic Law (Myoho-renge-kyo) can triumph over anything. It's important to be deeply confident of this.

Fearing hardships and bemoaning and resenting our environment is to live with the belief that the Law is outside our own life. So is losing confidence in our ability to overcome our circumstances and turning to others in the hope that they will save us, or blaming others for our problems, or giving in to hopelessness and resignation.

When difficulties beset us, no matter how trying they may be, we must clearly see them for the obstacles or devilish functions they are and battle against them without retreating. This is the way of life of those who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and dedicate their lives to the Mystic Law. The Daishonin says: "Nichiren's disciples cannot accomplish anything if they are cowardly" (WND1p481). In accord with these words, let's cast aside cowardice and make courage our foremost attribute.

People of courageous faith can break through the dark clouds of fear, ignorance, and delusion to bring the sun of the Mystic Law to shine and beautiful flowers of Myoho-renge (lit. lotus of the Mystic Law) to bloom in their lives.

President Toda gave the following guidance to the young women's division members in the pioneering days of our movement: "You should take pride in possessing the same life as the Buddha of the Latter Day. Win in life with a noble spirit. You must absolutely never depreciate yourself."

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism starts from the realisation that the supreme life condition of Buddhahood exists in each of us. It is a teaching that makes it possible for us to achieve the most profound inner transformation – a transformation of our fundamental attitude or mindset. That's why the Daishonin emphasises the importance of our heart or mind.

He writes: "Whether you chant the Buddha's name, recite the sutra, or merely offer flowers and incense, all your virtuous acts will implant benefits and roots of goodness in your life. With this conviction you should strive in faith" (WND1p4). All of our efforts in faith – including our practice of *gongyo* each morning and evening and all of our various Gakkai activities – are virtuous acts that "implant benefits and roots of goodness" in our lives. Those who advance with this deep awareness will be true victors who travel the direct path to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.

Always upholding the great philosophy embodied in the Daishonin's words, "It is the heart that is important," let us lead magnificent, victorious lives.

## The Sovereign, Teacher, and Parent of the Buddhism of Sowing Of the Latter Day of the Law – Part 1

Spreading the Fragrant Breeze of Compassion in a Defiled Age

Compassion is the hallmark of all Buddhas. Awakened to the truth that the ultimate Law of the universe exists within their own lives, Buddhas are aware that this Law also resides in the lives of all others.

Tears of grief, smiles, sadness, joy – Buddhas share all of these. They place absolute trust in people and believe in their potential. They love them and have boundless affection for them. Their compassion is entirely free of discrimination and extends to all. Accordingly, it is as broad and vast as the universe. As we see in the quote I cited earlier from the Sutta-nipata, this benevolent goodwill of Buddhas is not only directed toward everyone they encounter in their immediate environment, but also to all imaginable people unseen and unknown – encompassing the whole of humankind and all sentient and non-sentient beings. This is the reality of the three thousand realms in a single moment of life demonstrated by Buddhas.

In short, Buddhas are not simply enlightened to their own inherent power. They recognise the potential of all beings and continually devote their energies to help them actualise that potential. “Unlock your true humanity! Awaken to your own potential!” – this is the fervent wish of Buddhas. Their compassionate encouragement is an unending paean to the human being and a reverent salute to life itself.

This is also why Buddhas seek to vanquish ignorance and fundamental darkness, and presume to sternly denounce the arrogance of those who denigrate others and do not believe in life’s potential. All Buddhas’ benevolent and courageous actions for others are infused with compassion and empathy; they are dedicated to relieving suffering and imparting joy, as well as encouraging positive growth and rebuking error and wrongdoing.

## Discussion questions for Session Four

The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin focuses on individual or human awakening. Why is it that we regard the individual in solidarity with others as central in creating a more humane social order? What does this mean to each of us as we do our human revolution, and take action in our daily life e.g. at home, at work, while socialising and while doing SGIA activities?

Mrs Chan states: “So I have a mission that only I can fulfil. My situation is my responsibility.” What can we learn from Mrs Chan’s spirit of turning *karma* into mission? How does this relate to our own life?

Discuss what is so wonderful about the chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo?

What are and have been your greatest challenges in working for *kosen-rufu* and spreading and sharing Nichiren Buddhism? What benefits have you received through persevering in faith and practice, in spite of the challenges?

## End of Session Four

<sup>14</sup> *The World Of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings* Volume 18